

CHAPTER XXIII.

Exuent Omnes. HE professor looked up from his griddlecakes. "Why limit it to the coun-

judgment"

Mrs. Quimby, detecting in the old man's words a compliment, flushed an even deeper red as she bent above the stove.

"It's so seldom anything really hap- likely, if she's feeling that way. I pens around here," she said, "I just hope so. I ain't giving up the hermit been hungering for news of the strange goings on up there. And I must say summers to my postcard business. Quimby sin't been none too newsy on There's money in it if it's handled the subject. I threatened to come up right. But I've spent my last winter and join in the proceedings myself, especially when I heard about the book writing cook Providence had sent you."

"You would have found us on the porch with outstretched arms," Mr. that," the hermit predicted, "in Brook-Magee assured her.

It was on Kendrick that Mrs. Quimby showered her attentions, and when the group rose to seek the station, amid a consultation of watches that recalled the commuter who rises at dawn to play tag with a flippant train, Mr. Magee heard her say to the railroad man in a heartfelt aside:

"I don't know as I can ever thank you enough, Mr. Kendrick, for putting new hope into Quimby. You'll never understand what it means when you have given up and your life seems all done and wasted, to hear that there's a chance left."

"Won't 1?" replied Kendrick warmly. "Mrs. Quimby, it will make me a very happy man to give your husband his chance.

The first streaks of dawn were in the sky when the hermits of Baldpate filed through the gate into the road, waving goodby to Quimby and his waiting room- Then be started for wife, who stood in their dooryard for the smoker. On his way he paused

In the station Mr. Magee encounter- of Baidpate and fixed his eyes on the ed an old friend-he of the mop of ginger colored bair. The man who had complained of the slowness of the vilinge gazed with wide eyes at Magee.

"I figured." he said, "that you'd mit, seeing whither Mr. Magee's gaze come this way again. Well, I must drifted. "She picked it: I didn't exsay you've out a little life into this place. If I'd known when I saw you me, but I see my mistake now. I'm here the other night all the exciting wearing it home as a sort of a white things you had up your sleeve I'd flag of truce-or almost white. Do a gone right up to Baldpate with you." you know, Mr. Magee, I'm somewhat "But I hadn't anything up my nervous about what I'll say when I sleeve." protested Magee.

"Maybe." replied the agent, winking "There's some pretty giddy stories going around about the carryings on up on such an occasion? If you'd been at Baldpate-shots fired and strange away from a wife for five years what lights flashing. Doggone it! The only would you say when you drifted thing that's happened here in years, back?" and I wasn't in on it. I certainly wish you'd put me wise to it."

Two drooping figures entered the station-the mayor and his faithful lieutenant, Max. The dignity of the former had faded like a flower, and the same withered simile might have been applied with equal force to the accustomed jauntiness of Lon.

They filed out upon the platform. Mr. Magee carrying Mrs. Norton's luggage amid her effusive thanks. On the platform waited a stranger equipped for travel. It was Mr. Mar who made the discovery. "By the Lord Harry!" he cried. "It's

the hermit of Baldpate mountain!" And so it was, his beard gone, his hair clumsily backed, his body garbed in the height of an old and ludicrous

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Kendrick leaned closer. His breath came with a noisy quickness that brought the fact of his breathing insistently to Magee's mind. "I never knew how it was played," BALDPATE he said. Something told Mr. Magee that he ought to rise and drag Kendrick away

from that table. Why? He dld not know. Still, it ought to be done. But the look in Kendrick's eyes showed clearly that the proverblat wild borses could not do it then. "Tell me how it's played," went on

fashion, his face set bravely toward

"Yes," he said, "I walked the floor,

one to you," growled Car-

Maybe," replied Mr. Peters. "Very

"As author to author," asked Magee,

"There won't be any mention of

lyn. I've packed it away. Maybe I

can work on it summers if she doesn't

come up here with me and insist on

running my hermit business for me. I

hope she won't, it would sort of put a

my shack at night and read it's come

the world began have been those that

The Reuton train roared up to them

through the gray morning and paused

impatiently at Upper Asquewan Falls.

Aboard it clambered the hermits, ama-

teur and professional. Mr. Magee

the agent standing forlors in the sta-

tion door. He watched the building

until it was only a blur in the dawn.

A kindly feeling for it was it his

at the seat occupied by the ex-hermit

pale blue necktie Mr. Peters had resur-

rected for his return to the world of

"Pretty, ain't it?" remarked the her-

actly like it when she first gave it to

come into her presence again-about

my inaugural address, you might put

What would be your conversation

"That would depend," replied Magee,

"You've hit the nail on the head," re-

"on the amount of time she allowed

plied Mr. Peters admiringly. "She's

quick. She's like lightning. She won't

give me any time if she can help it.

That's why I'd like to have a wonder-

ful speech all ready-something that

would hold her spellbound and tongue

tled until I finished. It would take a

"What you want," laughed Magee,

guess I won't go over to Brooklyn the

minute I hit New York. I guess I'll

study the lights along the big street

and brush elbows with the world a bit

before I reveal myself to her. Maybe

if I took in a few shows-but don't

think I won't go to her. My mind is

fix it with her, though, to come back

to my postcard trade in the summers.

wonder what she'll say to that, May-

assumed name while I was hermiting

Then Mr. Magee went forward into

the smoking car. Long rows of red

plush seats, unoccupied save for the

mayor and Max, greeted his eye. He

strolled to where they sat, about half-

way down the car, and lighted an after

Max slouched in the unresponsive

company of a cigarette on one side of

the car; across the aisle the mayor of

table placed between two seats. He

Magee looked on, only half interest-

ed. Then suddenly his interest grew.

He watched the mayor build in two

piles; he saw that the deck from which

"Exactly what I was going to ask."

the table. His tired eyes were upon it.

fascinated; his lips twitched strangely.

the admiral's game. You'd hardly ex-

don't hang out at the swell clubs

where the admiral does. They won't

admiral on a public service board with

me-one time when I wared a lot of dignity and no brains prety bad-and

he sort of come back by teaching me

his game in the long dull hours when

we had nothing to do but serve the

"Yes," answered the mayor, "this is

up at the shack."

breakfast cigar.

was playing solitaire.

shot across his mind.

miral's game of solitaire?"

He laughed softly.

"Exactly," agreed Mr. Peters.

literary classic to do that."

"is a speech with the punch."

me for my speech."

thinking it all over. I knew it would

the cities once more.

on that lonesome bill."

never got anished."

"how about your book?"

Kendrick, trying to be calm. "You must be getting old," replied

the mayor. "The admiral told me the young men at his club never took any interest in his game, 'Solitaire,' he says to me. 'is an old man's trade.' It's a great game, Mr. Kendrick."

"A great game," repeated Kendrick. "Yes, it's a great game." His tone was dull. "I want to know how it's played," he said again.

"The six of clubs," reflected the mayor, throwing down another card. "Say, she's fine now. There sin't much to it. You use two decks, exacthappen, and it has. The winters are ly alike, shuffle 'em together-the eight hard, and the sight of you-it was too ty?" he asked. "I should say much. The excitement, the talk-it of hearts, the jack of-say, that's you were too parsimonious in your did for me, did for my oath. So I'm great! You lay the cards down here to her-back to Brooklyn just as they come, like this"-

He paused. His huge hand held a giddy pasteboard. A troubled look was on his face. Then he smiled happily and went on in triumph. "And then you build, Mr. Kendrick,"

he said, "the reds and the blacks. You build the blacks on the left and the job altogether-I'll come back in the reds on the right. Do you get me? Then-say, what's the matter?" For Kendrick had swayed and almost fallen on the admiral's game-

the game that had once sent a man to "Go on!" he said, bracing. "Nothing's the matter. Go on! Build, dash

it, build!" The mayor looked at him a moment in surprise, then continued.

"Now the king." he muttered. "now the ace. We're on the home stretch. crimp in it, but if she wants to I won't going strong. There, it's finished. It's refuse. And maybe that book'll never come out right. A great game, I tell get done. Sometimes as I've sat in you."

Professor Bolton pushed open the smoker door and sat down. to me that all the greatest works since

Cargan leaned back. Kendrick's fever reliowed face was like a bronze mask. His eyes were flercely on the table and the two decks of cards that lay there. "And when you've finished," he point "When you've finished"-

Mr. Cargan picked up the deck on

from the platform waved goodby to "All black," he said, "when the game comes out right."

"And the other?" Kendrick persisted softly. He pointed to the remaining deck. A terrible smile of understand



ing drew his thin lips taut. "And the

other, Mr. Cargan?" "Red," replied Cargan. "What else

could it be? All red." He picked it up and shuffled through it to prove his point. Kendrick turned like a drunken man and staggered back down the nisle. Magee rose and burried after him. At the door he turned.

to see me too, in her way. I got to to shudder. CHAPTER XXIV. be she could stay at the inn under an

made up. And I guess she'll be glad and the look on his face caused Magee

Miss Evelyn Rhodes, Reporter. OU heard?" he said helplessly. "My God! It's funny, isn't He laughed hysterically, and drawing out his handkerchief passed it across his forehead. "A pleasant thing to think about-a pleas-

ant thing to remember." "I thought I'd join you," said Professor Bolton. "Why, David, what is it? What's the matter?"

"Nothing," replied Kendrick wildly. "There's nothing the matter. Let me -by-please." He crossed the swaying Reuton leaned heavily above a card platform and disappeared into the oth-

The train slowed down at a small yellow station. Mr. Magee peered out the window. "Hooperstown," he read, "Reuton-Ten Miles." He saw Mr. Max get up and leave the car. Noiselessly Max returned to the

be built was thick. A weird suspicion group and stood silent, his eyes wide, his yellow face pitiful, the fear of a "Tell me," be asked, "Is this the addog about to be whipped in his every "Jim," he cried, "Jim! You got to

said a voice. Magee looked up. Ken- get me out of this. You got to stand drick had come in and stood now above by me." "Why, what's the matter, Lou?" asked the mayor in surprise. "Matter enough," whined Max. "Do

pect me to know it, would you? I tell"-Mr. Max was thrust aside and re placed by a train newsboy. Mr. Mahave me there. But once I took the | gee felt that he should always rememher that boy, his straw colored hair, his freckled beaming face, his tips with dition." their fresh perpetual smile.

"All the morning papers, gents," proclaimed the boy. "Get the Beuton Star. All about the bribery."

He held up the paper. It's buge

and soggy. But the story they told was new and live and startling. "The Mayor Trapped," shrilled the headlines. "Attempt to Pass Big Bribe

"Give me a paper, boy," said the mayor, "Yes-a Star." His voice was even, his face unmoved. He took the sheet and studied it, with an easy smile. Clinging in fear to his side, Max read too. At length Mr. Cargan spoke, looking up at Magee.

"So," he remarked: "so-reporters, eh-you and your indy friend? Reporters for this lying sheet-the Star?" Mr. Magee smiled up from his own copy of the paper.

"Not I," he answered, "but my lady friend-yes. It seems she was just that. A Star reporter you can call her and tell no lie, Mr. Mayor."

It was a good story-the story which the mayor, Max, the professor and Magee read with varying emotions there in the smoking car. The girl had served her employers well, and Mr. Magee, as he rend, felt a thrill of pride in her. Evidently the employers had felt that same thrill. For in the captions under the pictures, in the headlines and in a first page editorial, none of which the girl had written, the Star spoke admiringly of its woman reporter who had done a man's workwho had gone to Baldpate inn and had brought back a gigantic bribe fund "alone and unaided."

"Indeed?" smiled Mr. Magee to him-

In the editorial on that first page the triumphant cry of the Star arose to shatter its fellows in the heavens. At last, said the editor, the long campaign which his paper alone of all the Reuton papers had waged against a corrupt city administration was brought to a successful close. The victory was won. How had this been accomplished? Into the Star office had come rumors a few days back of the proposed payment of a big oribe at the into o. Baldpate mountain. The paper had decided that one of its representatives must be on the ground. It had debated long whom to send. Miss Evelyn Rhodes, its well known special writer. had got the tip in question; she had pleaded to go to the inn. The editor, considering her sex, had steanly refused. Then gradually he had been brought to see the wisdom of sending a girl rather than a man. The sex of the former would put the guilty parties under surveillance off guard. So Miss Rhodes was dispatched to the inn. Here was her story. It convicted Cargan beyond a doubt. The very money offered as a bribe was now in the hands of the Star editor and would be turned over to Prosecutor Drayton at his request. All this under the disquieting title. "Prison Stripes For the Mayor.'

The girl's story told how, with one companion, she had gone to Upper Asquewan Falls. There was no mention of the station waiting room nor of the tears shed therein on a certain evening, Mr. Magee noted. She had reached the inn on the morning of the day when the combination was to be phoned. Bland was already there. Shortly after came the mayor and

"You got to get me out of this," Magee heard Max pleading over Cargan's shoulder.

"Keep still!" replied the mayor roughly. He was reading his copy of the Star with keen interest now.

"I've done your dirty work for years." whined Max, "Who puts on the rubber shoes and sneaks up dark alleys hunting votes among the garbage, while you do the Old Glory stunt on Main street? I do. You got to get me out of this. It may mean jail. 1 couldn't stand that. I'd die."

A borrible parody of a man's real fear was in his face. The mayor shook himself as though he would be rid forever of the coward hanging on his "Hush up, can't you?" he said. "I'll

see you through.

"You got to," Lou Max walled. Miss Rhodes' story went on to tell how Hayden refused to phone the combination; how the mayor and Max dyfinally, through a strange series of accidents, the money came into the hands of the writer for the Star. These accidents were not given in de-

"An amusing feature of the whole affair," said Miss Evelyn Rhodes, "was the presence at the inn of Mr. William Hallowell Magee, the New York writer of light fiction, who had come there to escape the distractions of a great city, and to work in the soil-

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tude, and who manediately on his ar In the smile of the master. ing drama of Baldpate." "I'm an amusing feature," reflected

Magee.

"Mr. Magee," continued Miss Rhodes will doubtless be one of the state's chief witnesses when the case against Cargan comes to trial, as will also Professor Thaddeus Bolton, holder of the Craudall chair of comparative litera ture at Reuton university, and David Kendrick, formerly of the Suburban, but who retired six years ago to take up his residence abroad. The latter two went to the inn to represent Prosecutor Drayton and made every effort in their power to secure the package of money from the reporter for the Star, not knowing her connec-

tion with the affair.' "Well, Mr. Magee?" asked Professor Bolton, laying down the paper which he had been perusing at a distance of about an inch from his nose. "Once again, professor," laughed Ma-

gee. "reporters have entered your life. The old man sighed.

"You got to get me out of this," Max was still telling the mayor. "For God's sake," cried Cargan,

"shut up and let me think" He sat for a moment staring at one place, his face still lacking all emotion, but his eyes a triffe narrower than before. "You haven't got me yet!" he cried, namited the safe and secured the pre- standing up. "By the eternal, I'll fight cious package, only to lose it in an- to the last ditch, and I'll win. I'll other moment to a still different con- show Drayton he can't play this game tingent at the inn; how Hayden had on me. I'll show the Star. That dirty come, of his suicide when he found sheet has hounded me for years. I'll that his actions were in danger of ex- put it out of business. And I'll send "Did you hear what he said? A mob!" posure-"a bitter smile for Kendrick the reformers howling into the alleys. in that" reflected Magee and how sick of the fuss they started them-

> "Perhaps," said Professor Bolton. "but only after the fight of your life, Cargan." "I'm ready for it!" cried Cargan. "I

ain't down and out yet. But to think a woman-a little bit of a girl I could have put in my pocket-it's all a big joke. I'll best them. I'll show them. The game's far from played out. I'll win, and if I don't"-

He crumbled suddenly into his seat, his eyes on that unpleasant line about "Prison Stripes For the Mayor."

"If I don't," he stammered pitifully, well, they sent him to an island at the end. The reformers got Napoleon at the last. I won't be alone in that" At this unexpected sight of weakness in his hero, Mr. Max set up a renewed babble of fear at his side. The train was in the Reuton suburbs now. At a neat little station it slowed down to a stop and a florid policeman entered the smoking car. Cargan look

"Hello, Dan." he sald. His voice was lifeless; the oldtime ring was gone The policeman removed his belinet and shifted it nervously.

"I thought I'd tell you. Mr. Cargan." he said. "I thought I'd warn you. You'd better get off here. There's a elg crowd in the station at Rentor-They're waiting for you, sir; they've heard you're on this train. This lying ewspaper, Mr. Cargan, it's been telling tales-I guess you know about that. There's a big mob. You better get off here, sir, and go downtown on a car,"

If the mighty Cargan had looked limp and beaten for a moment he looked that way no more. He stood up and his head seemed almost to topen the roof of the car. Over that big patrolman he towered; his eyes were

rival became involved in the surpris- "And why," he bellowed, "should I get off here? Tell me that, Dan." "Well, sir," replied the embarrassed copper, "they're ugly. There's no to-



ing what they might do. It's a bad mob. This newspaper has stirred

"Ugly, are they?" sneered Cargan. "Ever seen the bunch I would go out of my way for, Dan?" "I meant it, all right, sir," said Dan Argus,

-"hs a friend to a man who's been a friend to me. No. I never saw you afraid of any bunch yet, but this"-"This," replied Cargan. "is the same

old bunch - the same lily livered crowd that I've seen in the streets since I laid the first paving stone under 'em myself in '91. Afraid of them? H-! I'd walk through an ant hill as scared as I would through that mob. Thanks for telling me, Dan, but Jim Cargan won't be in the mollycoddle class for a century or two yet."

"Yes, sir," said the pat miringly. He turned out of the car. and the mayor turned to find Lou Max pale and fearful by his side.

"What alls you now?" be asked. "I'm afraid," cried Max. "Did you hear what he said? A mob! I saw a mob once. Never again for me!" He tried to smile to pass it off as a pleas ant jest, but he had to wet his lips with his tongue before he could go on "Come on, Jim. Get off here. Don't he a fool."

The train began to move. "Get off yourself, you coward!" sneered Cargan. "Oh, I know you! It doesn't take much to make your stomach shrink. Get off."

Max engerly seized his hat and bag. "I will if you don't mind," he said. "See you later at Charlle's." And in a flash of tawdry attire he was gone. The mayor of Reuton no longer sat limp in his seat. That brief moment of seeming surrender was put behind forever. He waiked the aisle of the car, fire in his eyes, buttle in his heart. "So they're waiting for me, ch?" he said alond, "Waiting for Jim Cargan. Now, ain't it nice of them to come and meet their mayor?"

(To Be Continued Next Wedneslay.)

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